

Governor visits China to discuss coal bed methane development

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CHEYENNE, Wyo. - In two separate meetings with Chinese officials in Beijing today, Gov. Dave Freudenthal discussed future opportunities in tourism, energy and in particular, coal bed methane development. "I thank both officials for their gracious reception and am encouraged by the substantive nature of the discussions," Freudenthal said.

The Governor first met with Ma Xiuhong, Vice Minister at the Ministry of Commerce. Communicating through an interpreter, the Governor and the Vice Minister covered a wide range of topics. As expected, clean coal development was central to the discussion, but the conversation also touched on agriculture and tourism. The leaders talked about a possible visit by a Chinese delegation as a way to strengthen tourism ties between Wyoming and China.

A second meeting later in the day with Mr. Zhang Guobao, Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, also yielded significant possibilities for collaboration. The Governor and Vice Chairman discussed clean coal technology and the partnership between the University of Wyoming's School of Energy Resources and General Electric for the development of a High Altitude Gasification Research Center. Later, the conversation expanded to a discussion of coal to liquids technologies, the containment of spontaneous combustion coal fires and the gasification of coal for the creation of synthetic natural gas.

Freudenthal offered to share Wyoming's experience in the containment of underground coal seam fires, which apparently the Chinese are dealing with in some Western provinces. Vice Chairman Zhang Guobao suggested that Wyoming researchers might be interested in the extensive efforts underway at the Coal Energy Research Institute near Tiayuan in Shanxi Province.

The Chinese also have a strong interest in coal bed methane development, though the situations in China and Wyoming are slightly different. China currently uses methane from deep underground coal mines to produce electricity from mine mouth generators, which is then used locally. Plans are being formulated to expand this energy resource.